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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews service learning definitions and principles to illustrate common threads connecting service learning philosophy across contexts. Although there is general agreement that service learning occurs in school-based and community-based categories, it cannot be universally defined. Definitions from K-12, higher education, and adult programs generally agree that participants learn and develop through meaningful community service experiences. Ten principles for effective school- or community-based programs, as articulated by the Wingspread organization in 1989, are listed. A matrix is proposed as a tool to plan and facilitate the service learning program regardless of the setting or participants. The matrix includes choosing a definition, stating the setting and the learning goals, describing the experience or activity or community need, preparing for the activity, engaging in the activity, reflecting on the outcomes, and recognizing and celebrating accomplishments. Benefits for participants in service learning activities are summarized. (Contains 14 references.) (SAS)

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NAVIGATING LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING

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Abstract
This paper is written from the perspective that service learning is an applicable methodology for adults in community service programs and youth and adult corps-based programs. In reviewing the recent service learning literature, one would could assume that service learning is only applicable in academic settings. It is the experience of the writers, that service learning is effective with adults in community contexts, such as volunteer community service programs and youth and adult corps-based programs. This article presents service learning as a philosophy and method originating from the roots of experiential education; and further extending its effectiveness in non-academic adult and community education settings. Service learning in these contexts, strengthens the concept, learning is lifelong.

In this workshop, a review of service learning definitions and principles will illustrate common threads or principles connecting service learning philosophy and the different users of service learning applying service learning across contexts. In an attempt to operationalize service learning across contexts, an illustrative matrix is offered and will be used by workshop participants to assist in understanding, organizing and planning how service learning can be applied in diverse educational settings. Service learning may also be included in other settings such as therapeutic, adventure-based, community building, and community programs working with at-risk youth, adjudicated youth or inter-generational populations.

Foundations
"Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1979). At the heart of service learning is experiential education theory. Effective experiential learning combines direct experience that is meaningful to the student with guided reflection and analysis (Proudman, 1992). The authors assume that experiential learning can occur at any age it is developmentally appropriate. In experiential education, the learner/ student becomes the participant in the planning and execution of the educational activity. Adults perceive learning as an active process of inquiry, weaving experience and cognitive learning together to form their knowledge (Knowles, 1990).

Kolb's four experiential learning styles support the notion that there are diverse learning styles and that learning designs must accommodate these styles to maximize effective and inclusive learning. His styles are *experience;* experience made sense through intention is called *reflective observation;* experience grasped through comprehension is called *abstract conceptualization;* and experience made sense through extension is called *active experimentation* (Candle, 1990).

Service learning means different things to different people.
Shumer (1993) states that there is general agreement that service learning occurs in two general categories: school-based and community-based. He further asserts that service learning as a concept cannot be universally defined and resists rigid definitions and universal understanding. However, the philosophy or concept of "service learning" can be understood through specific forms, or particular settings, and the concept is best understood by examining specific examples and exploring each application with desired outcomes. Each organization that utilizes service learning must define for itself how to apply the concept of service learning to its specific purposes.

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The chart below illustrates several definitions created and accepted by various constituencies or settings. This list is by no means a complete list. It is, however, as comprehensive as we need to illustrate several points.

Form/Setting	Service learning Definitions
Youth programs and K-12 schools	Service learning is a teaching and learning model that connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning, personal growth and civic responsibility (National Youth Leadership Council). Service learning is a method by which young people learn and develop through active participation and thoughtfully organized, meaningful service experiences (Alliance for Service Learning and Education Reform).
Higher Education	Service learning as a philosophy and methodology can serve both an intellectual challenges and a call to personal and professional growth (Palmer, 1993).
Community Service Programs serving youth and adults	Service learning is the deliberate linking of community development and personal development (ACTION, 1979).
National and Community Service Act of 1993 (appropriate in multiple settings, i.e., civic, etc.)	Service learning is a method through which citizenship, academic subjects, skills, and values are taught. It involves active learning -- drawing lessons from the experience of performing service work (Corporation for National Service, 1993).

As the chart above illustrates, no one definition will satisfy everyone. Examining definitions does serve us in several ways: to discover common threads; to promote discussion about the meaning of service learning in diverse settings; to recognize that application and needs in various settings may vary according to outcomes; and to strengthen that learning can occur in "non-school" settings. In your service learning design, consensus of a definition is critical to implement service in your specific setting. Likewise, a framework of principles is necessary to shape and guide the curriculum development and learning processes along the way.

The Wingspread organization articulated, in 1989, ten principles formulated by 70 organizations interested in service and learning. These principles today are widely respected and are helpful in developing effective school and/or community-based programs:

1. Engage people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good.
2. Provide structured opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experience.
3. Articulate clear service and learning goals for everyone involved.
4. Allow for those with needs to define those needs.
5. Clarify the responsibilities of each person and organization involved.
6. Match service providers and service needs through a process that recognizes changing circumstances.
7. Expect genuine, active, and sustained organizational commitment.
8. Include training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition and evaluation to meet service and learning goals.
9. Insure that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate, and in the best interests of all involved.
10. Commit to program participation by and with diverse populations.

A Tool For Making Service Learning Work

Service, combined with learning, adds value to each and transforms both.

With your definitions in hand, a framework is useful to start developing a strategy to implement service learning. The proposed matrix assists experiential educators in learning how to develop and implement a service learning plan. The outline format serves as a planning tool which integrates community service with the learning processes. The service learning "PAR" model of Preparation (P), Service Activity (A), and Reflection (R), is the foundation of the matrix but is driven by the desired learning outcomes for the students/participants/agency.

Service Learning Matrix

			Service learning Process		
Definition Used/ Population Serving	**Learning Out-comes**	**Describe the Experience/ Activity/Community Need**	**Prepare** (What?)	**Activity** (So What?)	**Reflect, Recognize, Celebrate** (Now What?)

Procedure:

Step 1. Choose a point of reference or a definition which best fits your needs or develop your own for your needs and write it in the chart.

Step 2. State your teaching or learning setting, (e.g., middle school science and civics class to understand principles of ecology and city government; corps members whose purpose is to develop leadership and civic responsibility) and define learning goals.

Middle School Example: Science and civic classes. Goals: to learn scientific inquiry processes, chemistry and physics principles and concepts as applied in watershed ecology and restoration. To learn how local government functions, specifically applied to Natural Resources Department.

Step 3. Define activity to meet those goals (Note: Include your students/corps members in the planning process.) Define the community problem/ issue and the community need the activity is seeking to serve.

Middle School Example: Adopt a local wetland. Create a living laboratory. Collect, calculate and interpret pH values on a field study team. Present hypothesis and conclusions. Community Problem or Issue: Polluted local watershed. Need: (long-term) restore local watershed habitat and remove pollution sources; (short-term/immediate) clean-up local wetland and educate ourselves and public.

Step 4. Combine experiential learning processes and service learning PAR as planning (briefing) and reflection (de-briefing) techniques:

Prepare - *What ?* What materials do you need to conduct these experiments?
What is pH? What is our purpose?
Activity - *So what ?* So what does pH have to do with the water in this pond?
What is healthy pH value?
Reflect - *Now what ?* What controls pH? How can we change pH? What factors influence pH ? How about the water at my home? Compare healthy and non-healthy water systems. Make recommendations to the city council.

Step 5: Recognize and Celebrate accomplishments.

Use of Matrix

Educators from Outward Bound, K-12 schools, and community based non-profit agencies used this framework at a workshop in March 1996. Each participant from their respective professional setting, learned to distinguish between community service and service learning, the applicability of service learning to their settings, and student/clientele. The chart assisted us in facilitating our plans. While some designed academic learning outcomes, others designed activities to accomplish interpersonal skills,

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or to gain civic or community responsibility outcomes. This matrix also assisted us in learning how to mediate and structure the experience.

Conclusion

In closing, the learning derived from service learning experiences can benefit the learner regardless of whether the learner is a student or non-student. Change or learning can occur personally, socially, vocationally and/or academically. Service learning can be perceived as an inclusive pedagogy and andragogy applicable for youth and adults alike. Service learning as a teaching and learning methodology is an effective tool for transmitting program goals and objectives and for facilitating participant learning goals. It truly is an experiential process.

Service learning, regardless of the user or participant (student, corps member, citizen, etc.), just does not simply happen through experience. The Wingspread Principles support that service learning is an intentional process, requires the activity or project to be community-based and thereby addressing a real community need, involves the learner as an active participant, and requires intentional reflection and time to synthesize information, experiences, emotions, and learning outcomes as defined by the teacher or program coordinator. These outcomes can range from changes desired by the community, learner, institution, organization, environment, health, education, business, social structures, and more. If learning is intentional then planning is a necessity. The matrix provides a structure and a process for planning service learning experiences.

The authors of this article have observed and experienced that the use of service learning in community service programming benefits the program, community and participants in many ways. We have found that, although service learning is becoming a widely institutionalized trend in academic settings today, it is also beneficial in community-based organizations providing opportunities among youth and adults and inter-generational populations. Lastly, we assert, that service learning can benefit organizational or community building needs in for-profit organizations as well.

A brief summary of benefits for participants in service learning activities may include:

- experience a personal service ethic, deepen citizenship, and social responsibility.
- awareness of community needs
- build skills and confidence in ability to initiate social action and change
- participate in an active community development role
- strengthen community relations
- develop critical thinking and problem solving skills
- encourage life long involvement in civic activities
- aid in the life transitional phases, i.e., school to work, grade to grade, classroom and community
- work on team building, communication and leadership skill development
- integrate academic skill development across curriculum

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